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News Release ~ Communiqué

Minister Dupuy announces changes to athlete assistance program

TORONTO, March 28, 1995 - Canadian Heritage Minister Michel Dupuy today announced major changes to the Athlete Assistance Program (AAP), a federal program which provides financial assistance to Canada's top international calibre athletes for their training and competition needs.

Effective April 1, 1995, AAP stipends to carded athletes will be increased by 25% based on the existing carding system. Also, to assist athletes in their transition following retirement, a new system of deferred tuition credits will be implemented as of September 1, 1995.

Under the deferred tuition system, carded athletes will be eligible for one year's tuition at a post-secondary institution for each year they are carded. In cases where an athlete does not attend a post-secondary educational institution during a year when he or she is carded, the athlete will be eligible for tuition credits for that particular year. Tuition credits will be applicable toward completion of a post-secondary degree upon the athlete's retirement from sport competition.

"Canada's amateur athletes remain a priority for me," said Minister Dupuy. "The over-arching federal policy objective for sport is promotion of the achievement of excellence in sport by ensuring that opportunities exist for athletes to achieve success at the highest international levels through fair and ethical means. To achieve this objective, the first and foremost priority for funding will be athletes, and the programs and activities that contribute directly to the support of athletes," the Minister added.

While the Athlete Assistance Program is not intended to meet all the financial needs of high performance athletes, it is the only program which provides direct assistance to athletes in the form of a monthly living and training allowance and, where applicable, tuition support. This program is complemented by indirect support from other Sport Canada programs, including funding to National Sport Organizations for national team training and competition programs, national coach salaries, sport science and medicine services, etc.

The Minister also indicated that he has asked Sport Canada to pursue consultations with the athletes and the sport community with a view to revising the program during 1995-1996, which will be a transition year. He stated that he hopes to be in a position to announce the results of these policy revisions this summer, including possible further increases to stipends, subject to budget considerations. Full implementation of the AAP policy revisions, including possible further increases to the stipends, would occur in 1996-1997. AAP policies and stipend levels were last revised in 1985.

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